

## Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

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DCS Communications Office

**April 8, 2005**

### The Week Ahead

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**Tues., April 12** – The Commissioner attends the Governor's quarterly cabinet meeting at the state Capitol.

**Wed., April 13** – The Commissioner attends a meeting with the Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) and Children's Rights, Inc. (CRI).

### Condolences

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DCS extends condolences to the family and friends of Billie Carr, who served on the health unit in the Upper Cumberland region as the SAT coordinator. Billie passed away Friday morning after a brief illness. Please remember the health unit and the Upper Cumberland region in your thoughts and prayers.

### TNKids 05-05 Training

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*Submitted by Donna X. Johnson, Director of Training*

All training for the TNKids May 2005 (05-05) release will be available on the DCS Intranet on April 25. We will be offering classroom lab sessions for those who need to complete the required curriculum in the classroom with a trainer present and exercises to use for practice.

The labs will be available in Memphis (April 26-27), Jackson (April 28), Nashville (April 27-29, May 2-3 and May 6), Tullahoma (May 4-5) and Knoxville (May 2-6).

On each of these days, users may schedule time in one-hour blocks (8:30-9:30 a.m., 9:30-10:30 a.m., 10:30-11:30 a.m., 1-2 p.m., 2-3 p.m., and 3-4 p.m.). Other than this lab availability, all 05-05 training will be completed online. To schedule one or more blocks of time in the lab classrooms, please contact your training coordinator.

The 05-05 release contains changes that affect several different populations: CWBC, case managers, supervisory staff, court liaisons, legal staff, CSAFSS teams, FSAs, and all other TNKids users. Please refer to the DCS All message sent on March 29 for a summary of enhancements planned for the release.

## DCS Helper Bees Needed for Davidson County CPS Clean-Up

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The department needs volunteers to swarm in and work on overdue Child Protective Services cases in Davidson County. All DCS employees are invited to participate and while a background in CPS is helpful, it is not mandatory. Volunteers will be doing a variety of tasks, including entering data into TNKids, conducting home visits, making collateral contacts and filling out forms and paperwork.

Lunch will be served. If childcare is a concern, a supervised playroom will be available.

All overtime and transportation costs will be covered.

This volunteer day will be held from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, April 16, at the Davidson County office, located at 900 Second Ave. N., in Nashville. Volunteers are not obligated to stay the entire afternoon, but should be prepared for at least a two-hour commitment.

If you are interested, please contact Karen Loney, the regional administrator's assistant, at [Karen.Loney@state.tn.us](mailto:Karen.Loney@state.tn.us). If you are interested in volunteering, but are unable to attend the April 16 session, contact regional administrator Carla Aaron at [Carla.Aaron@state.tn.us](mailto:Carla.Aaron@state.tn.us).

## DCS Honors Local Law Enforcement

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*Submitted by Shannon Thomas, communications coordinator*

The Department of Children's Services' East region recently hosted an appreciation ceremony in Cocke County and honored two local law enforcement officers for their child abuse prevention efforts.

Anthony Nease, a Child Protective Services team leader, said awards were given to Cocke County detectives Robert Caldwell and Derrick Woods, for their hard work in investigating cases. "They have been instrumental in working with CPS staff. They assist with perpetrator interviews and prosecution," said Nease. Local law enforcement officers were also thanked for their assistance in making home visits with CPS.

Awards were also given to Joy Large, a juvenile court clerk, and Jennifer Shelton, director of juvenile court. "We thanked Juvenile Court for assistance with filing petitions and quickly scheduling the CPS cases to court," Nease said.

All attendees received blue ribbon pins in recognition of April's Child Abuse Prevention month.



Case manager Leanne Crawford presents detective Derrick Woods with an appreciation award.

### **A Time for Praise and Rightsizing**

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*Submitted by Commissioner Viola P. Miller*

Please know that recently I have received some very nice feedback about the improving quality of the work of DCS. Various individuals from outside the agency have publicly recognized the value of child and family team meetings (CFTMs), and the work our staff is doing through that process to focus on families in a strengths-based way.

I had a wonderful e-mail about work done by the Giles County CPS unit and Central Intake. Our Greene County staff members were recognized for their professionalism in a difficult situation. Several judges have complemented the “Building Families – One Child at a Time” adoption initiative, with the Shelby and Southwest regions specifically being mentioned.

Foster parent advocates report that calls are being returned in a timely manner. Both resource parents and private providers have expressed their appreciation for being included in the cross-functional teams.

We have our first set of continuous quality improvement (CQI) issues from the field. The Core Leadership Team is scheduled to review and respond to those issues soon.

I am so proud of all your hard work. We still have a way to go to meet the outcomes we have set for our families and children, but we are making progress everyday and have the right to take pride in that progress.

Now to the issue of rightsizing ... Judy Cole, the regional administrators and many others are working hard to rightsize our direct service units. The goal, to be accomplished no later than July 1, is to have ALL caseloads meet the following standards:

- Child Protective Services = 11 new referral/month
- Home County Case Managers = 14 cases
- Juvenile Justice = 25 cases

These numbers were not made up, but rather reflect nationally recognized best practices case load standards. In order to reach these goals, the RAs will, of necessity, be required to do some internal reallocation of resources. This process will not make everyone happy all the time; Change never does. However, please understand that these caseloads are non-negotiable and we must allocate staff first in a way that insures that we meet these standards. It is impossible to do high quality work with excessive numbers of cases. When we reach the above goals, we will have one of the best ratios, across the board, in the nation.

### **National Crime Victims' Rights Week: April 10-16**

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*Submitted by Isiah Davis, victims' rights liaison*

Crime victims and survivors, victim service providers, criminal and juvenile justice and allied professionals and community volunteers will join together across America to commemorate the National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This 2005 Silver Anniversary is dedicated to President Ronald W. Reagan, who first proclaimed this time-honored national observance on April 8, 1981. This year's theme, "Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are," is a simple, yet powerful, message that focuses attention on victims' needs for justice, for comprehensive services to help them cope in the aftermath of crime, and for the right to be treated with dignity and compassion by our criminal and juvenile justice systems and society.

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we must ask ourselves, "What can I do to make a difference?" Let me offer some suggestions for what ***one person*** can do to help victims of crime:

- If you know of a crime that has occurred, ***report it***. For every crime we fail to report, an offender remains free to harm others.
- If someone has been hurt by crime, ***support him or her***. In the long run, the support you provide may be just the link that a victim needs toward recovery.
- ***Volunteer*** to help victims.

- Give us your ideas for making our homes, schools, and communities safer or how to make our programs more effective and efficient.
- Perhaps most important, please remember that *every time* you help a victim in need, and *every time* you take the time to assist somebody who is hurting, you are, indeed, doing our community justice.

Please see the following calendar of events for National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

*"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."  
Martin Luther King Jr.*

**April 9 – Victims to Victory (3K Walk) “A Walk for Justice for Crime Victims”.** 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Starting point: Criminal Justice Center, 1548 Poplar Ave. to 201 Poplar Ave., Memphis. For more information call (901) 274-6828.

#### **April 10-16 – National Crime Victims Rights Week, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**April 11-13 – Clothesline Project at MTSU.** This is a three-day event held on the campus of MTSU. Students, faculty members, and community members are invited to make a shirt for display at the Take Back The Night event. Along with this project, there will be self-defense classes and films about issues concerning domestic and sexual violence. For more information, contact Dr. Susan Trentham at 615-898-2193 with the June Anderson Women's Center.

**April 12- Seamless Delivery of Services for Crime Victims,”** a workshop by Jerry Estes and Anne Seymour held at the Foundry in Knoxville with luncheon to follow with keynote speaker Joanna Tucker Davis. For more information, contact Peggy Atchley at [Peegy.atchley@knoxcounty.org](mailto:Peegy.atchley@knoxcounty.org).

**April 14 – Third Annual Victims Rights Luncheon,** with keynote speaker Joanna Tucker Davis, an attorney with the National Crime Victim Law Institute, which works to establish victim assistance clinics nationwide to provide legal representation for crime victims. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 305 West Seventh St., Chattanooga. Cost: \$12. Registration required. For more information, contact Jan Eason at (423) 752-5140, ext.136.

**April 14 – The Coalition's 7<sup>th</sup> Victims Memorial Ceremony.** The ceremony begins at 6p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, followed by the walk to Miller Plaza for the candlelight vigil at 6:30 p.m., where victims and survivors will be honored. Also, the evening also features the annual Chattanooga Exchange Club Children's Flower Memorial commemorating children who have died as a result of abuse. For more information, contact Regina McDevitt at (423) 775-2107.

**April 14 – Crime Victims Candlelight Vigil.** 5:30 p.m., the Children's Garden, Centennial Park, Nashville.

**April 16 – Linking Neighborhoods to Comprehensive Services MVP (Maximizing Victim Power) 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament.** 9 a.m.- 2 p.m., Shelby County Crime Victims Center, 2602 Mt. Moriah, Memphis. For more information, call (901) 545-4357.

**Additional Activities:**

**April 21 – 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Crime Victims Rights Awards Dinner.** 6-8 p.m., Hilton Hotel, 939 Ridge Lake Blvd., Memphis. For more information, call (901) 545-4357.

**April 21 – Victim’s Rights Educational Health Fair.** 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Partnership’s Crisis Response Center, 300 East Eighth St., Chattanooga. Various social service and health care providers will be available to provide information about access to victim’s rights services in the community. For more information, contact Kristen Zinser at (423) 755-2734.

## **Juvenile Justice Retreat**

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*Submitted by Brennan Francois, director of treatment facilities*

At the juvenile justice retreat held April 6-8 at Paris Landing State Park, case managers and team leaders from each of the regions were joined by their peers from the group homes and youth development centers, along with a small group from central office. The theme of the retreat was “team work in the interest of youth in their families”.

Jackie Lee, director of community services, and Brennan Francois, director of treatment services, welcomed all to the retreat and challenged each member to participate fully in the sharing of experiences and development of solutions and action steps. Kenneth Steverson, executive director of juvenile justice, reviewed the four basic principles of professional behavior. Steverson challenged the group to keep these principles in mind during the discussions.

“Find ways to practice the principles in your daily interactions with families and coworkers,” he said, also instructing the group to consistently review the principles at the start of their monthly meetings with their staff.

After everyone completed introductions, the real work began with each team treating the group with a selected karaoke song for a night of song and laughter.

On the second day of the retreat, the group was focused on teamwork. Steve Hornsby, deputy commissioner for juvenile justice, began the morning by presenting Goal One, which states that, “The Tennessee Department of Children Services’ Juvenile Justice Division will be the number one juvenile justice program in the USA”. Hornsby encouraged feedback regarding ways juvenile justice can be successful at working towards goal one.

“Change is going to come to juvenile justice,” Hornsby said. “We are going to be painfully honest as we look at what we are doing. It is not personal. You must be adaptable.”

Hornsby engaged the group in an exercise looking at suggestions for possible outcomes. The groups’ suggestions were congruent with the challenge of looking at the best interest for youth and families. Hornsby challenged the staff to research other programs with measurable data and to share their ideas and experiences.

Brennan Francois presented on attitude, with the notion that success is dependent on the attitude we bring. We had a lively discussion regarding where attitudes come from and how we might manage our own attitude as we work together in the best interest of youth and their families.

Jackie Lee followed up with a dynamite presentation on “How to Build and Maintain a Team,” which was informative regarding the skills needed to reach consensus and how to manage conflict.

Following lunch, Lee facilitated a child and family team meeting regarding problem and issues involved in working together as a team between the field and facility staff. As one might predict, this was a very lively discussion. It was quite productive in that the participants appear confident and reflective list of identified issues. Lee then assigned each group a salient issue with the goal of defining a solution and developing the actions steps for reaching the given solution.

The groups worked until dinner on their plans, keeping Central Office staff busy with their request for input. It was a surreal moment, observing the staff practicing the very points we had reviewed and discussed thus far in the retreat. The spirit of teamwork and the practice of the four principles were in action.

On the second evening of the retreat, Francois facilitated a presentation regarding adolescent development, which focused on reconciling adolescent behaviors (you know, the behavior that makes all parents think of running away from home!) with the stages of adolescent development.

The next morning began with each team presenting their solutions and action steps. The presentations reflected thought and professional commitment to improving the way we do business. Steverson is planning to utilize the presentation in the matrix plan for initiating recommended action steps by the Justice for Juvenile Taskforce Members and the strategic planning committee. We have not heard the last of these plans; they will become realities.

To close out our retreat, attendees were treated to Valerie Handy’s dynamic presentation on family-centered practice. She reminded the group that treating our youth and their families with genuineness, respect and empathy are at the core of what we do. She also reminded us to take pride in what we do. We were encouraged to stop saying, “I work



for the state” when we are asked what we do for a living. With confidence, we should let people know, “I work for the Department of Children Services”. We should let people know what they don’t read in the papers in regards to what we do and why it brings us such satisfaction.

In reviewing the evaluations from the participants, it appears that the retreat was a success. The truth regarding success will reflect in the follow up on the work and how well the participants are able to apply the material shared in their professional efforts and with their coworkers in their home offices.

## **Core Leadership**

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### **Core Leadership Meeting Brenda Bell, Presiding April 5, 2005**

#### **Commissioner’s Comments**

The Council on Accreditation (COA) kickoff was held last week. Commissioner Miller has decided that we need to slow this process down due to complexity of transitioning the community service agencies (CSAs). However, we will continue to work toward certification. The COA workgroup was divided into 20-25 subgroups and given different standards to organize in four different categories.

The next COA meeting will be held in June and we will evaluate the agency’s progress in complying with the standards. We will vote to determine if we are ready to make formal application in three months, or if we should extend our application for another three months.

#### **Announcement**

Susan Price is the acting director of permanency. Lane Simpson is the acting director of foster care and adoptions.

#### **Domain Reports on VI, VII, and VIII**

Shalonda Cawthon distributed a handout on Domain VI, which discussed the accomplishments and areas to address.

Randal Lea presented the progress update report for Domain VII to Core Leadership and discussed accomplishments and areas of concern.

Michael Price presented the progress update report for Domain VIII to Core Leadership and discussed accomplishments and areas of concern.

#### **Focus of CRI-TAC April 13 Meeting**



The plaintiffs' attorneys and the Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) be here on April 13 to discuss progress on the Path to Excellence. The attorneys will be coming in a day early to review and discuss the TAC Monitoring Report.

Areas to be addressed during the meeting include needs assessment planning, regional implementation plans, spending plans, caseload caps, caseload ratios, data issues, contract monitoring, cultural competence plan, staffing concerns, the CSA transition, the health unit transition, CPS caseloads, the tracking of One Worker/One Child, juvenile justice and more.

### **Juvenile Justice**

Major concerns are the placement needs and issues with juvenile justice children. A pilot plan was developed with children who absconded from placement in Davidson County. Additional staff will be added to the Internal Affairs division to create children's services special investigators positions. The investigators will be composed of two staff members in each grand division and they will assist law enforcement in picking up absconders.

The plan also includes an updated community risk assessment to be used to identify 10 absconders. Special investigators will travel with the Metro Nashville Police Department and pick them up. The team will work with Servella Terry to address a community partnering relationship. There are approximately 200 absconders across the state. The goal is to cut this by 75 percent within 90 days. Juvenile Justice Team Excellence is being formed and a retreat is being scheduled April 5. A Juvenile Justice Path to Excellence will be developed.



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***The doors we open and close each day decide the lives we live. –***  
Flora Whittemore

***Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal. – Henry Ford***

